A public sector guide to

Supporting a hybrid team

Learn the key mindsets and behaviors you need to lead inclusively

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How, when, and where we work changed overnight

The pandemic unleashed a whirlwind of policy and protocol changes that completely altered the way most government agencies and employees operate. How, when, and where you work had to evolve overnight, and as a result, organizations and employees scrambled to adjust to a new normal. While some changes proved to be trends that faded quickly (Zoom happy hours, anyone?), remote and hybrid work weren't. In fact, even as agencies begin to welcome employees back, the demand for hybrid work is only growing, and work arrangement preference is cementing itself as a new kind of diversity that the public sector needs to embrace moving forward.

Before COVID-19, hybrid work was almost non-existent across the public sector. Across all industries, just 7% of employees had some kind of hybrid arrangement[1] prior to 2020. But now, a third of workers say they'll quit their jobs if forced to go back in person full time[2], and 52% say they want some kind of hybrid work arrangement moving forward[3]. Overall, 75% of workers say they'd even go so far as to take salary cuts or reduced perks to keep their hybrid work arrangement[4] intact. Perhaps due to these massive sentiment shifts and other factors, many government organizations, when not restricted by security requirement, are rethinking traditional strictly in-office work arrangements and embraced a hybrid model.

It's clear that hybrid work is here to stay. Is your team ready?

[1] CNBC - How post-Covid hybrid work will change job benefits and perks, April 2021
[2] Robert Half study - 1 in 3 workers ready to quit if asked to come back into office, April 2021
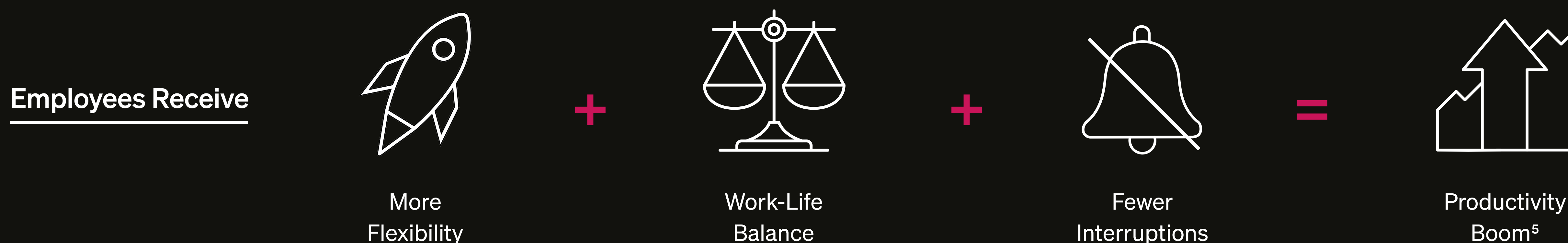[3] McKinsey - What employees are saying about the future of remote work, April 2021
[4] CNBC - How post-Covid hybrid work will change job benefits and perks, April 2021

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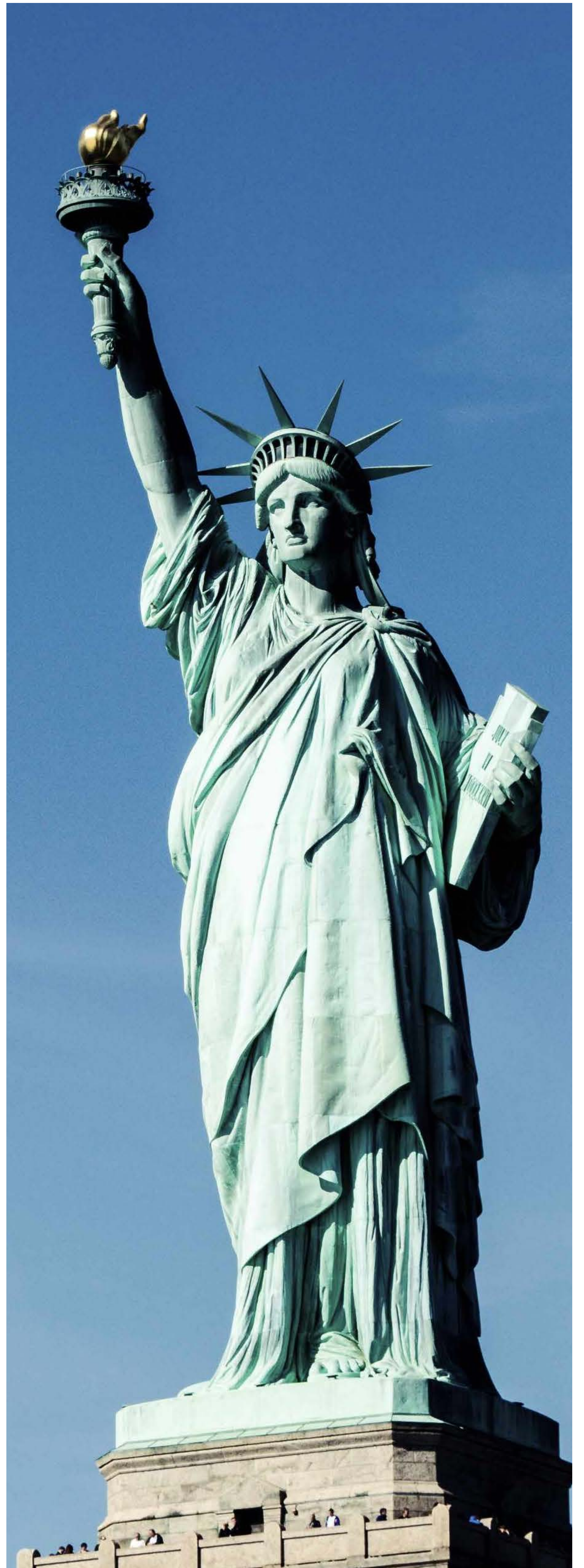
Understanding hybrid work's impact on your people

The sustained popularity of hybrid work well into this pandemic is no surprise:

Employees Receive

🚀 **+** ⚖️ **+** 🔕 **=** 📊

More
Flexibility

Work-Life
Balance

Fewer
Interruptions

Productivity
Boom[5]

Hybrid work isn't without its challenges

The increased isolation, lack of social connection and "us vs. them" mentality brought on by hybrid work is fueling high levels of stress and burnout while also contributing to an overall decline in employee well-being and lack of belonging. COVID swiftly helped rewrite the playbook for employee experience and as a result, public sector organizations are struggling to stem the tide of the "Silver Tsunami" and attract new talent from up and coming generations.

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Since the start of the pandemic, we've tracked 10,000+ BetterUp Members across various industries and job functions to understand how they've been adapting to this new world of work. Our research indicates that despite the aforementioned employee gains in productivity and performance, hybrid and remote workers are experiencing the lowest levels of belonging since the pandemic began.

Why does this matter?

We know that belonging and inclusion are key to organizational success and impact everything from employee intent to stay to job satisfaction and much more. Without a sense of belonging, employees aren't empowered to bring their whole selves to work, contribute their best work, take risks, or collaborate as effectively. In short, organizational performance suffers when employee belonging and inclusion are low.

Employee belonging over time

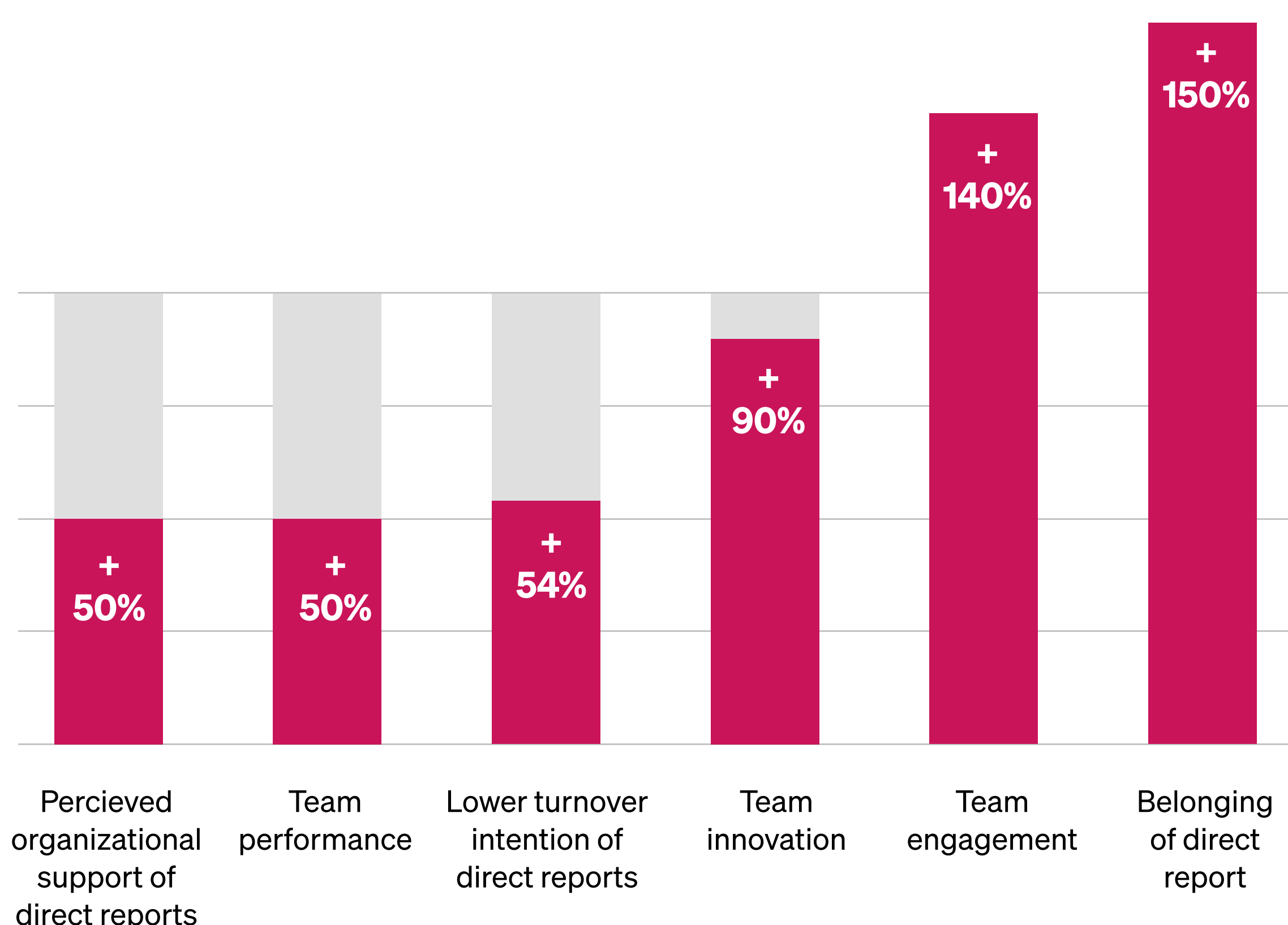| Jul | Sep | Now | Jan 2021 | Mar | May |
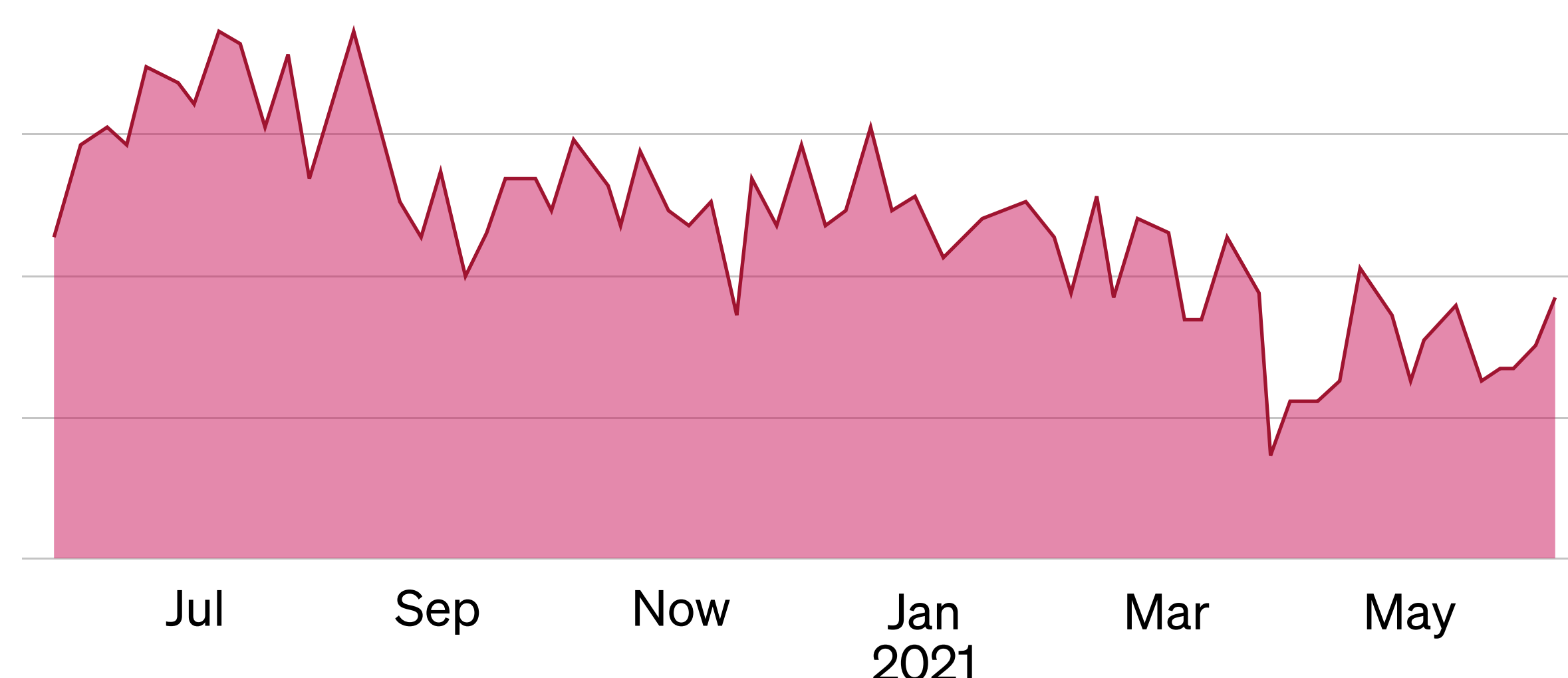
Why may this be happening?

Under stay-at-home orders early in the pandemic, much of the world was in the same "work-from-home boat." Now, with a wider number of people across all types of working situations, at home, hybrid and in person, it's more apparent that we're not all in the same boat. We're in different boats moving further apart from one another, making it harder to maintain connection and belonging. Perhaps no other group plays a more pivotal role in fostering that essential belonging and inclusion than frontline managers.

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The hybrid work challenges for frontline managers

Just as parents have had to navigate the complexities of family systems against a backdrop of hybrid school arrangements and remote learning, managers are navigating the complexities of team systems against hybrid and remote work arrangements. Even if your organization or team isn't adopting hybrid or remote work, it's very likely that you will face complexities from stakeholders, constituents and partners who are. Where the rubber meets the road — it's managers who will have to make work "work" in this new hybrid era. The key to that ignition? Inclusive leadership.

An inclusive leader sets the tone and models the behaviors for their team to create an environment where each person feels seen, valued, respected, and able to contribute. And when leaders do these things well, it shows up in their teams. When their leaders are highly inclusive, direct reports experience the following boosts:

Inclusive leadership delivers:

Percieved organizational support of direct reports	Team performance	Lower turnover intention of direct reports	Team innovation	Team engagement	Belonging of direct report
+ 50%	+ 50%	+ 54%	+ 90%	+ 140%	+ 150%

For hybrid managers, inclusive leadership also means tackling new and complex workplace challenges:

• How do you cultivate meaning, purpose, and a sense of belonging when teammates no longer share similar experiences?

• What does inclusion look like if only some types of people are in office and others are still at home?

• How do leaders protect against hybrid work creating a two-class system where workers in the office are overvalued or over-rewarded with opportunities for growth and advancement?7

By first understanding your hybrid team's unique needs, you can develop the right mindsets and behaviors to support them.

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The unique needs of your hybrid team

While all government organization have changed the landscape of typical work environments, too much focus has been on shoring up technology, tools, and infrastructure to enable employees to work remotely and partner with remote workers. While necessary, these investments were narrowly focused on how we work, and didn't account for supporting people through change, cultivating connection, and helping employees feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in the organization — no matter when or where they're working.
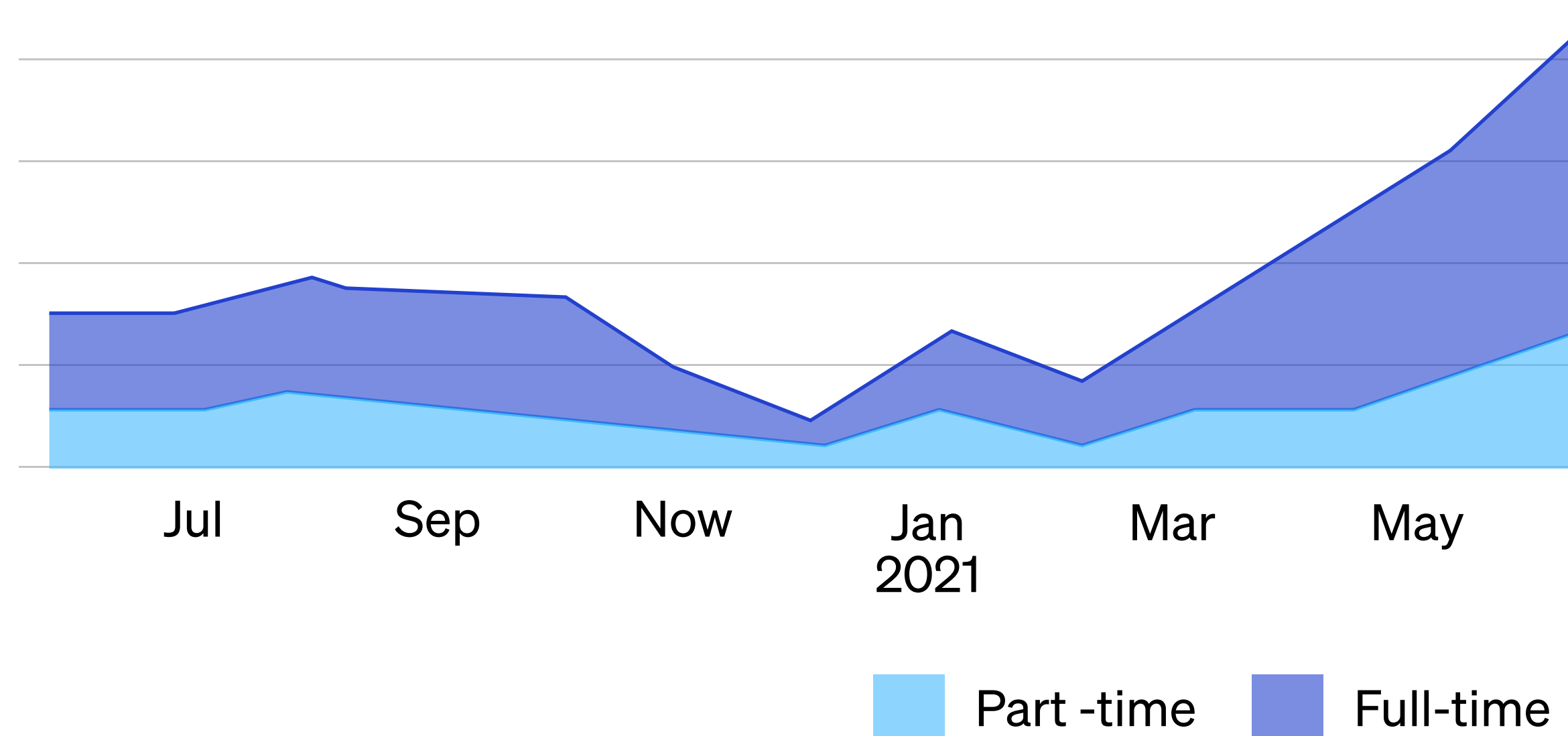
While public sector leadership has made arrangements to 'return to work', our research shows that hybrid work policies are increasing more rapidly than returning to the office full-time. June 2021 saw a 223% higher rate of return to a hybrid work arrangement. People are not simply going back to prepandemic ways of working; they're entering a new form of work altogether.

Shift to fully remote work rates

Jul   Sep   Nov   Jan   Mar   May
                      2021
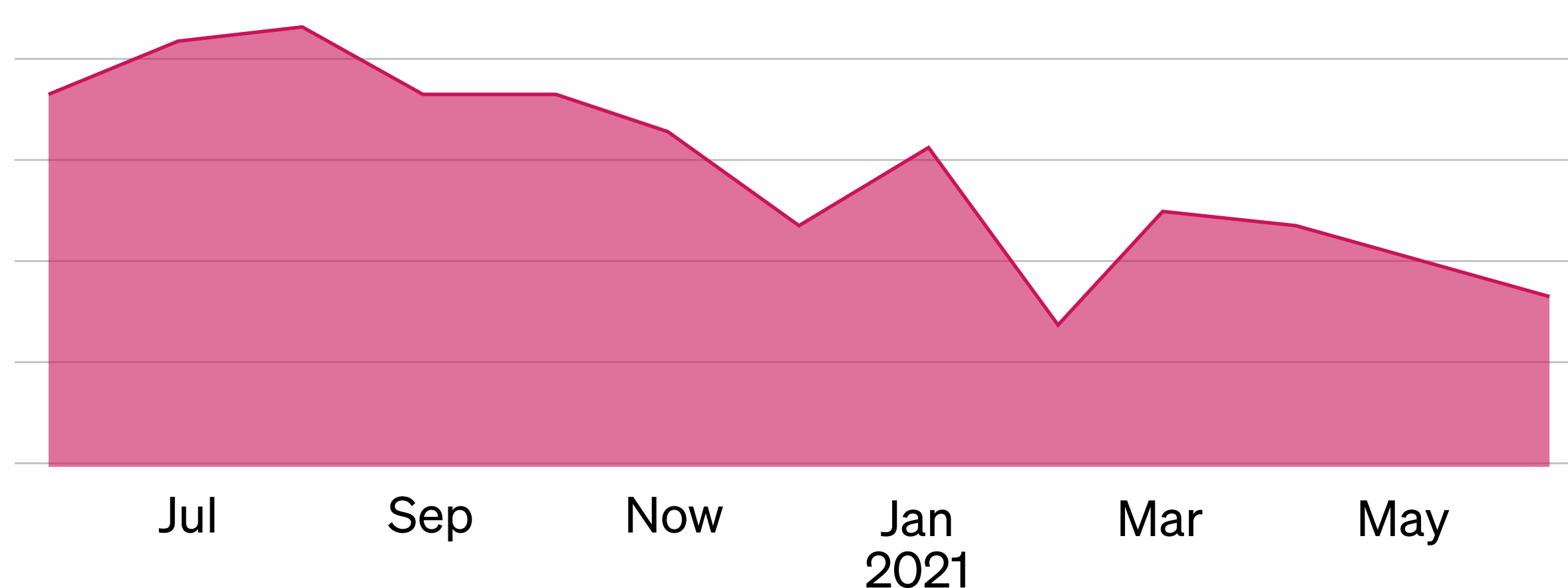
Shift to hybrid work rates

Jul   Sep   Nov   Jan   Mar   May
                     2021

■ Part -time   ■ Full-time

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Different work arrangements mean different access to information, communication channels, formal and informal relationship building opportunities, networking, and social connection. The desire for hybrid work may also reflect that people are at different life stages with different stressors, demands, and even aspirations. People leaders need to recognize each employee as a unique individual and be aware and sensitive to different professional and personal stages while adjusting to each person's changing needs over time.

As BetterUp Members have gone into and out of remote work, we've tracked their coaching topics (anonymized) as they've gone through shifts in their work environments. The data show that employees moving into hybrid work have the most unique need profiles. Importantly for managers to know, those employees moving to hybrid work encounter higher rates of challenge in Strategic Management and Leading Others and seek more support for well-being and communication.

Coaching topics by work arrangement

What BetterUp Members by work arrangement are discussing with their Coaches.

	Remote	Hybrid-remote	Office
Career development	19%	15%	15%
Communication	20%	19%	21%
Influence	13%	12%	13%
Leading others	15%	18%	18%
Strategic management	6%	10%	9%
Time management	7%	8%	9%
Well-being	20%	19%	15%

0%　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　25%

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Manage inclusively to support hybrid teams

In this new world of work arrangements, fostering inclusion has become more complex. A workforce spread across hybrid, remote, and fully in-person arrangements create new dynamics that have a material effect on belonging and inclusive cultures. BetterUp has done extensive research on the profile of what makes an inclusive leader, and cultivating these key mindsets and behaviors will help managers lead hybrid teams to success.

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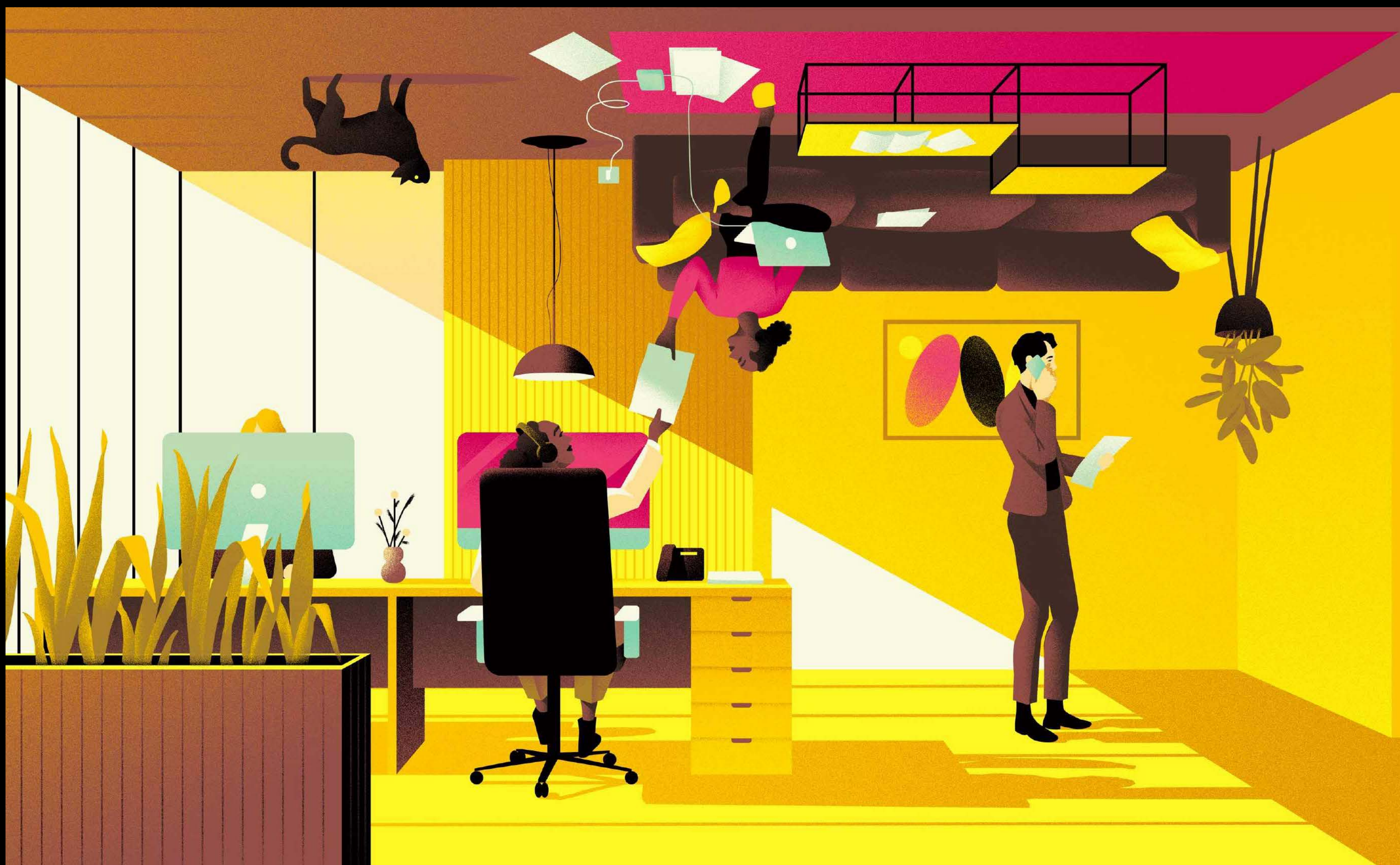
1

Promote alignment and strategic planning

When managers align individual efforts and processes to create clarity and a shared vision and purpose among dispersed employees, they create a cohesive, driven, and well-guided team equipped to achieve organizational goals. Several studies found that employees who feel directly aligned with the mission and clearly understand their contribution to achieving that mission are 3X less likely to look for a new job and have increased performance.[6]

Strategic planning is another important skill for hybrid managers and goes hand-in-hand with alignment because it creates a shared roadmap to the future for all team members, helps anticipate blockers, and develops contingencies. Although planning has taken on a new shape since the pandemic began, direct reports say that managers with high strategic planning skills result in them feeling lower stress and higher focus in their own work.

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"In virtual meetings, it can sometimes be harder to notice body language or cues that people might not be crystal clear on what you expect of them. Leave more time in meetings for people to ask questions, in particular at the end of a meeting. **Ask your team to give a number between 1 and 5 on how clear they are on their actions. Anything less than a 5 means you need to spend more time providing that clarity."**

Meg Lyons
PCC, BetterUp Coach

"Get on the same page first. Listen to your team members' particular situations, environment, personal challenges, emotional state, and stress levels. When planning, include your team's mental health as part of your priorities. Some questions I tell my hybrid manager Members to ask: **What are your team's 3-4 key priorities this week, this month, this quarter? How can you actively communicate and align your team around them?"**

Fabian Orue
BetterUp Coach

[6] Josh Bersin - 5 things to consider in a red-hot job market, March 2021

2

Strengthen connection and relationship building

Traditionally, leaders in the public sector are warned about blurring the lines between personal and professional. However, you can build a meaningful relationship without crossing an ethical boundary. For hybrid managers to promote inclusion, they must invest time in building authentic relationships with their dispersed team members, peers, and other employees by getting to know what matters to them and what support they need to be successful. When successful, relationship building at work directly impacts employee performance with highly inclusive teams outperforming their less inclusive peers by 27%.[7]

With feelings of isolation and burnout driving hybrid workers to consider leaving their roles, it's more important than ever for managers to cultivate connection across their teams. When leaders can deepen connections among their hybrid employees, they help build positive mindsets and motivations that contribute to overall employee well-being no matter when or where they're working.

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"I tell hybrid managers to take time to build trust and engage the team on how it wants to interact. **By slowing down now to lay this foundation, you can speed up as a team to deliver against the strategy or project deliverables later.** By showing up this way as a leader, the team will enjoy an increased sense of belonging, enjoy creative problem solving, and deliver joint success."

Nikki Moberly
PCC, CBC, BetterUp Coach

"Spend time understanding the needs of your team members in a hybrid workplace, even if you think you know them pretty well. What are their goals in choosing to work from home or office? **What are their most pressing concerns about hybrid work?** What will make them feel included? What do they need from you to be effective? Leading with empathy will be foundational to the effectiveness of managers in the hybrid workplace."

Yashi Srivastava
PCC, BetterUp Coach

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[7] Deloitte - A new recipe to improve business performance, May 2013

3

Encourage participation and recognition

To help prevent a culture of "us vs. them" among hybrid and in-office workers, managers must help foster a healthy participatory culture. Leaders should seek feedback and input from those who don't always speak up or are otherwise less able to participate, as remote employees can sometimes "hide in plain sight." When managers solicit participation, it makes it easier for employees to engage with others on their teams and feel more confident to share, take risks, and push themselves.

Lastly, inclusive leaders also make an effort to recognize people for their work and support their efforts and growth — especially important for hybrid teams. Studies show that a majority of remote workers have felt excluded or mistreated[8], but recognition lets employees know that the skills and diverse experiences they've contributed are valued. Employees recognized more regularly have a better view of their organization and better relationships with their team members. In fact, workers recognized within the last week are 103% more likely to feel supported in their role, and they're also 67% more likely to think their organization cares about their well-being more than profits.

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"I tell BetterUp Members who are hybrid managers that **when thanking people for their work, be very specific in what you appreciate.** You likely don't have visibility into all the things that your team members are doing in the working day, so letting them know exactly what they did that had the most positive impact allows them to know what to keep doing."

Meg Lyons
PCC, BetterUp Coach

"Pay attention to your own preferences and biases. **Do you notice yourself assigning more responsibilities to the team member who sits next to you?** Does it feel like those you meet in-person on an ongoing basis deliver better results than those working remotely fulltime? When it comes to making important decisions about an employee's career, make sure that the reasons don't have to do with where the employee was working from."

Yashi Srivastava
PCC, BetterUp Coach

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[8] Harvard Business Review - Remote workers feel shunned and left out, November 2017

Partner with BetterUp to

Learn more ways to successfully lead hybrid teams in the public sector

BetterUp partners with the public sector organizations of all shapes and sizes to drive the deep and lasting change in mindsets, behaviors, and skills needed to foster high performing managers and teams. Combining the science, coaching, and leading-edge technology, organizations can now address complex challenges facing hybrid workforces with a personalized, high-touch, and scalable approach.

Drive culture change across your organization

Learn how you can create a culture where every manager is a role model of inclusive leadership and every employee feels like they belong.

Schedule an executive briefing

Coaching

Our coaches tap into the individual's personal motivation and values to drive peak performance and foster a sense of belonging. Stronger leadership capabilities mean higher-performing teams. Specialist and group coaching provides meaningful development on topics like communication, collaborating and leading remotely, inclusive leadership, and well-being.

Science

Using the world's largest dataset on coaching for human development, BetterUp identifies the most important skills for driving productivity, engagement, and performance in a hybrid world. Our validated assessments personalize the experience by identifying the specific strengths and development areas and targets those with coaching and tailored resources. Track progress and compare your organization to industry benchmarks with a robust suite of assessments, including BetterUp's Employee Experience Index and Belonging Index, proprietary metrics that combine key behaviors and mindsets that our research suggests are the strongest predictors of positive business outcomes, belonging, and inclusion.

Technology

BetterUp's platform builds focus and accountability through personal goal tracking, handpicked resources mapped with those goals, and nudges to keep users on track and notify them of other learning opportunities.

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